

1862

Am. Tract Soc.
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TWO TRACT SOCIETIES,

AND THE

THREE HARTFORD JUDGES.

HARTFORD:

ELIUS GREE, STATIONER AND STEAM PRINTER, 13 STATE STREET.

M.DCCCLXII.

There is a strong and growing dissatisfaction with the American Tract Society, New York. It is evinced in this State by the fact that individual churches, consociations, local associations, and the General Association have passed votes of disapprobation; and, generally, by the fact that the mass of Christians, both in New England and the West, have either become indifferent to this Tract cause, or they are seeking to help it forward through some other channel. The churches of Connecticut and New England are now turning their contributions into the treasury of the old American Tract Society, Boston. The movement is spontaneous and earnest. Without one being aware of what others were doing, letters were sent, about the same time, from different parts of this State, inviting this Society to take possession of the field, and to take collections from the churches. It is a positive and earnest expression of dislike toward the policy adopted at New York. An effort has been made, therefore, to arrest the movement. Among other things done, the speeches of Chief Justice Williams, and Judges Parsons and Ellsworth have been circulated very extensively; evidently for this particular purpose, to reconcile the community to this policy, and to prevent any steps being taken in opposition to it.

We deem it obligatory upon ourselves, therefore, having organized a movement of this kind in the city, deliberately, and upon conscientious grounds, to call attention to the points involved in it, viz: *To the Policy of the Society at New York, WHAT IT IS; to the movement in opposition to it, WHAT IT PROPOSES; AND TO THE INADEQUACY OF THE SPEECHES TO ARREST THE MOVEMENT.*

It would have created some additional excitement to have done this at the time, immediately after the speeches were delivered. But this was not what was desired. It is a matter of momentous interest. It needs to be looked at, therefore, with the at-

most candor and prayerfulness ; and the length of time that has now elapsed we deem especially favorable to this.

I. The Policy of the Society. What is it ?

The method of ascertaining this is indicated in the following resolution, passed by the Society at its last annual meeting : "Resolved : That the action of the Executive Committee be approved."

The Policy of the Society then, is the same that has been adopted and carried out by the Executive Committee, including the Publishing Committee. But what that is, is generally known. It is to avoid, if possible, all reference in the publications of the Society to the subject of slavery. It was first indicated by a systematic mutilation of a certain class of authors, as Gurney, Mary Luidie Duncan, and others, from whose writings every earnest and feeling allusion to American slavery has been expunged. Next, when the churches, upon whose sympathy the Society has relied for support, began to wake to their responsibility, and called upon the Society not only to desist from farther mutilations, but to go forward and deal impartially with the word of God, applying it to all sins alike, the Committee refused to do it. And still again, is to be noticed the course pursued after the appointment of the "Committee of Fifteen." When the refusal to publish as proposed could be endured no longer, and the members of the Society, having the responsibility, demanded the right of directing in this matter, "the Executive committee *consented* to the appointment of a Committee to investigate and report." The Committee appointed consisted of fifteen as intelligent Christian laymen and ministers as the churches could furnish, with the Honorable Theodore Frelinghuysen at their head ; and after careful and mature deliberation it reported, in part, as follows : "In the judgment of your Committee, the political aspects of slavery lie entirely without the proper sphere of this Society, and cannot be discussed in its publications ; but those moral duties which grow out of the existence of slavery, as well as those moral evils and vices which it is known to promote, and which are condemned in scripture, and so much deplored by evangelical Christians, undoubtedly do fall within the province of this Society,

and can and ought to be discussed in a fraternal and Christian spirit."

The Society, then, not only unanimously adopted this, and other resolutions reported; but it also chose committees for the ensuing year, and entrusted to them the work of carrying it into effect. But scarcely had the members of the Society returned to their homes, when it became evident that the Publishing Committee had no intention of doing it. Private, explanatory circulars, were sent South, stating what it did intend, and circulars were afterwards sent North, in self-justification. And the officers at the Tract House commenced a plan of operations with the view of carrying their policy at the next annual meeting, and obtaining a vote of approbation for it, which they did. The Policy of the Society, then, is the same as that of the Committee, which is, *to publish nothing with the specific purpose of diminishing the evils of slavery, nor, for assisting masters in learning their duties and responsibilities.*

A claim has been set up, we are aware, that seems somewhat to modify this view. First, it is said that an examination of the publications of the Society will show a somewhat different policy, for they contain frequent allusions to slavery. But if allusions have been made to it in such a way that agents at the North have felt justified in saying that the Society publishes upon slavery, it is in such a way, too, that those at the South have felt justified in claiming that it does not publish upon it.

Again, it is said that the Society publishes the whole bible with comments, and Locke's Common-Place Book, containing some passages referring to oppression.

But if this is the same as applying the Gospel specifically, why has not the Society pursued the same course with reference to other evils? Or, if it is the same as applying the gospel specifically, why, having done one, does it hesitate to do the other? except that one is to pronounce a judgment, and assume a responsibility in the case, and the other is not? One is like giving a chest of medicines to a patient, and letting him select for himself; the other is to select for him, which is to give an opinion, and show a purpose, and which gives the patient an apprehension of disease, which the other does not.

Again, it is said the Society does not refuse to publish upon the evils of slavery, and the duties of masters, it only *defers* doing it. This, however, seems like serious trifling. We were told the same thing five years ago, by one in authority, too. The Committee, so he put it, does not refuse to publish, it is only waiting for suitable tracts to be presented. And now, after that tracts of all varieties have been presented, and our hopes once came so near being realized that a selection was made, and a set of new plates prepared for striking them off, and the Committee, too, was entrusted by a vote of the Society, with the work of going forward to publish upon the subject; and, moreover, after that all this has been undone, too, and the plates prepared have been thrown away with old type for re-melting, now we are told the same thing again, "the Society does not refuse to publish." What, then, is refusing? Is it refusing for the fireman to stand still and not play his engine when the flames are spreading, and his comrades are rallying him to the work? Does his protesting that he will take hold to-morrow, or at some future time, when they get a better machine, or when there is less excitement, and the flames have subsided a little, make any difference? It is very evident that the Society *does refuse* to publish upon these subjects. Not that we suppose it would if the wishes of the majority of the society could be expressed. But large public meetings, such as are held in other societies for the purpose of eliciting the opinions and wishes of the individual members of the society and of the Christian community, to whose good wishes the society owes its existence, seem not to have been desired. And it is only till within the last three years that any provision has been made for holding them. Then, at the first meeting, a Committee was appointed to investigate and report; at the second their report was adopted, and the Society took a step in advance; and at the third it went back again. A thing which evidently could never have taken place, except the officers of the Society more directly connected with its management than others deemed it important to impress their own policy upon it. But in doing this they will always have peculiar advantages, even though they confine their efforts within the limits of the Constitution. As long, therefore, as the officers retain their strong preferences, and use the advantages of their official standing and the Society's press, to enforce their

opinions and give shape to the meetings of the Society,—so long the Society will be virtually silent upon the subjects connected with slavery. This was their policy before the society acted upon the question, it has been their policy since, in *opposition* to that action, and now it is so with a vote of approval.

II. The opposition to this Policy. What does it propose?

This will be learned by ascertaining the claim it sets up. It claims that the Society, having assumed the responsibility of "promoting vital godliness and sound morality," and especially as it is calling upon the churches to assist in doing this, ought to go forward in the clear light of God's word and educate the public conscience. It is not to watch the sentiment of the community, and conform to it upon any moral question, nor is it to be silenced by it, but it is to strive to bring it up to the standard of the Gospel. If there is a strong and growing tendency to break away from this standard and to bring in another, with its train of evils, it should endeavor, with a promptness and decision proportionate to the evil threatened, to prevent it. It is not desired that the Society, in doing this, should become a temperance Society, an anti-gambling Society, nor an anti-slavery Society. It is simply desired that it should pursue its appropriate work; a part of which is to utter its protest and array its influence against sin; to do it firmly, but kindly, and with a purpose to make its influence felt.

Every principle must be defended or contended for in some specific application; and the application which the principle happens to have at present, is to the subject of slavery. Consequently, in so far as the Society at New York refuses to apply it in this connection, in so far the movement is on that account. But the principle has a much larger application, it applies to the treatment of *all* moral evils. And if not carried successfully here, it will have to be contended for in some other application. For one of the Secretaries of the Society, and others sympathizing with him, less than two years since, in this city, frankly admitted that, should the use of ardent spirits, and dancing, and the raising and using of tobacco, and other evils, get into the church to an extent to make them popular, and find friends enough to defend

them, who shall demand that nothing be said against them, acting upon the principle the Society acts upon with reference to slavery, it would be obliged to be silent. And is slavery the only evil that is growing bold, and that wishes to be let alone?

Here, then, we have the two principles side by side,—the one the Society *is* acting upon, and the one that it is claimed it *should* act upon. Acting upon the latter, the Society stands in God's own strength. It becomes a great moral power in the world; it goes before and *leads* men, not only to Christ, but into the higher walks of "vital godliness and sound morality." Acting upon the other, it does not lead but is *led*. It goes up or goes down on the scale of morality, just as the community goes up or down. Having but little power to *prevent* apostasy, it shows great facility in *conforming* to it.

Before leaving this point, however, it is necessary to correct a misapprehension. These speeches and the published remarks of one of the Secretaries have led some to think that the movement is a designed attack upon the Society at New York. "That such is the object,—to diminish its receipts, embarrass its operations, and curtail the circulation of its books, is, to my apprehension, written in numerous publications and speeches with the clearness of a sunbeam."—Speeches, p. 17. "He (Secretary Eastman, reported at New Haven) dwelt emphatically upon its (the Society's) benevolent plans and purposes in carrying the Gospel to the destitute of our own and other lands, and contrasted its operations in strong language with the principles, recently announced, that the great work of this Society should be given up because 'it does not pay' as well as other kindred institutions."

We regret that the venerable judge should have seen in his movement, deliberate and prayerful, and entered into only from a sense of necessity, nothing but an unholy passion. We wonder that his own consciousness of rectitude did not prompt him to attribute a good intention, at least, to others. The imputation of unchristian feelings by those at the Tract House has been common; and there, consequently, we expected to be misunderstood. It was so when their policy of mutilating books was discussed. The editors who took part in it had to encounter their displeasure. So when the matter of finances was discussed; when it was asked

if a system of keeping the accounts and making reports could not be adopted that would prevent misunderstanding, they replied, and repeated it, that these persons would not be satisfied "if the recording angel kept the accounts." When it is asked, by one whose careful comparison of the London Society's system of operations with that at New York entitles him to a respectful hearing, if a more economical and better method of doing the Society's work cannot be adopted, he is charged with an intention of "giving up the work because it does not pay." And just now a tract is being sent out from the Tract House upon the *importance of colportage*, as if this movement was designed to put an end to the circulation of religious tracts and books, and the work of visiting from house to house.

But while we feel the injustice of this, and have been led more than ever before to feel the need the Society has of holding large public meetings for discussing its interests, such as the American Board holds, we have no quarrel with the Society. We shall study the past and take lessons from it. We shall examine carefully the economy and efficiency of different modes of labor, and shall recommend adopting the best. We shall especially urge upon those with whom we co-operate a careful regard to the wishes of their great constituency; also, that they open all the affairs of the Society to a full and free discussion, on the principle that the churches who support our benevolent institutions should breathe into them their own enterprise and progress, and give to them the benefits of their combined wisdom. But in doing this we have no intention of injuring another society, except as a determined opposition to an objectionable policy, will necessarily do it. The great, and, we might almost say, the only object in view in this movement is to build up a system of tract operations, that will make *no distinction in favor of sing.* And if, as the result of this, the opposite course

* Secretary Eastman says, [Independent, April 21,] that the Tract referred to was written without consultation with the Secretaries, and without the knowledge of either of them. He is entitled to the benefit of this, though the Tract has been used at different times with their evident approbation.

shall be made to appear false and treacherous to the cause of Christ, we shall be happy ; for it will only appear what it really is.

We have dwelt upon these two topics for the purpose of presenting the two policies, the one at New York, and the one urged, in contrast. If there is a difference of opinion in the Christian mind of New England upon the subject, we think it is owing chiefly to a want of definiteness in their conceptions. Partly they do not understand the position of the Society at New York, and partly, not the movement in opposition to it. They do not distinguish between contending against a time-serving and dangerous policy, and contending against men. The latter we entirely disclaim, except as it is incidental. We respect, highly, many of the men with whom we find ourselves at difference ; and concede to them generally the same conscientious regard to duty that we claim for ourselves. The difference between us, so we hope, at least, is not that one wishes to do his duty, and another does not, but it is as to what is duty. And here, through various circumstances that would naturally influence, yet not justify their course, we think they have culpably erred. We adopt, therefore, the example recommended to us by the apostle. Paul thought one thing to be right ; and Peter, with a natural timidity that would affect, in a measure, his opinion, thought another right ; at least, so he acted. "For," says Paul, "before that certain came from James he did eat with the Gentiles ; but when they were come he withdrew, and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision ;" and, says Paul, "*I withstood him to the face, for he was to be blamed.*"

And so, too, with us. When those at the South, whatever be the reason, endeavor to ingraft upon Christianity the abominations of slavery we must *withstand them* ; for "*they are to be blamed.*" And if a great society, whose province it is to show them the iniquity of such a course, says nothing, deems it, indeed, less important than to instruct them as to the immorality of dancing and using tobacco, thus encouraging the sin, we must withstand *that* too. For it is doing a great evil ; it is breaking down the distinctions between right and wrong, demoralizing the conscience, and preparing the way for a fatal defection in Christian practice. We take our position, therefore, conscientiously and confidently, and

expect the churches will carry the movement forward. This brings us, then,

III. To the speeches designed to arrest it.

Having given these speeches a careful examination, and even wishing to agree wherever we can with brethren whom we so highly respect,—two of them are highly esteemed members of the church,—we are nevertheless compelled to say that we see nothing in the speeches calculated to produce the effect intended. They are wholly inadequate to the purpose.

The things that generally combine to make a speech effective, are especially four: The standing and reputation of the speaker, the arguments presented, the sincerity and earnestness evinced, and the hard things said, if not carried too far, against the opponent. We shall be led, then, to speak of each of these points. The last, however, for we are sorry to see that neither of the speeches is without this element, and in one it is the staple, we pass over hastily. Such things contribute nothing in the way of eliciting truth. If they are statements of facts, well; but if they are inferences and assumptions, they excite a suspicion of weakness in the cause. If one of the speakers wished to give us pain and grief, we are frank to admit that he succeeded; for the imputation of unchristian motives always does this, even though we should feel the man is unchristian who makes them; and even though, too, his mode of argument should show a want of a high sense of Christian integrity in himself. Still, that christians have their motives impeached, and have to encounter trials, is no reason why they should not go forward in the path of duty.

So, too, we pass over the matter of sincerity and earnestness; the speakers evinced both. They sincerely and earnestly strove to arrest any movement against the policy of the American Tract Society, New York. But instead of arresting this movement, this should only stimulate to renewed earnestness that we may establish a better and a scriptural policy. The elements in these speeches, then, that are to arrest this movement, if they are to do it at all, are the two mentioned first.

First, then, we see nothing in the character and standing of the speakers to do it. It was evidently expected by the Secretaries of the Society at New York, and others who have interested themselves, and are still interesting themselves, in circulating the speeches, that this consideration would exert an important influence. And, no doubt, since the world is ruled to a great extent by authority, something has been accomplished by it. Some have probably said, that, "If such men support the Society at New York, especially such as Judge Williams, it is worthy of every one's support; any movement in opposition to it is uncalled for;" and perhaps they have said, "wrong," too. But this is an argument that can be used both ways. For, is any greater moral worth to be attributed to these men than to Chief Justice Hornblower, and Judge Jessup, and Henry Hill, Esq., not to mention others who earnestly differ from them? Is it supposed that they have more logical ability, and are more discriminating than President Wayland and Judge Storrs, who are upon the other side? And again, is not their influence counteracted by another consideration? Is it nothing that every apologist for the extension of slavery, by bloodshed and murder, even, that every one who rejoices in the revival of the slave trade, that every one who ridicules a higher law, and who laughs at the thought of being conscientious in these matters, is it nothing that all these are upon the same side? are they found side by side with such men upon other moral questions, upon the subject of temperance, and gambling, for instance? And does it not excite the suspicion that they have erred here?

As these gentlemen, however, widely known and highly respected, have given their permission to this use of their names, the Society at New York is entitled to the advantage of it. Still, however, had they given their influence to the other side, it would have excited less surprise, except as we take into account their relation to the Society; for it would have seemed more in accordance with their usual habits of thought and feeling. But another important consideration, which is not sufficiently thought of in such connections is, that when men give opinions with the *reasons* for them, the opinions are to go for only what the reasons are worth. Secondly, then, we see nothing in the arguments presented to arrest this movement.

The object is to arrest it by justifying the Society at New York, thus showing that there is no necessity for it. But there is a serious and insuperable difficulty to be met. The Society, having assumed the responsibility of "promoting vital godliness and sound morality," has obligated itself to a certain course of action: i. e., to hold up the whole standard adopted. If it is one that includes and takes in other standards, as the heathen, for instance, with its polygamy and caste, and the funeral pile; and the worldly standard, with its love of pleasure, including intemperance and licentiousness, and its love of unjust gain, with the slave trade and a system of unpaid labor, then it must say so, and let the world know what its standard is. But if, on the other hand, it is the Bible standard, it must hold this up, also, and show its applications, and insist upon obedience to it. It must divide the word, not as men wish, but as it finds God's laws neglected. It assumes to be "God's mouth," and to speak in his stead; it has, therefore, no choice, but it is to apply the truths of the Bible to every form of social or individual life it comes in contact with.

It was the adoption of this course, and the application of God's laws to the whole conduct and civil relations of the Jews that distinguished, in part, the true and the false prophets. Prophecy to us smooth things, the people said; and the reply of the true prophet invariably was, What the Lord hath said, that must we utter. It was the course adopted by Christ and his Apostles. All the sins that lay in the path of their daily lives, they rebuked without distinction; though the reasons for silence were, in some cases, could they have foreseen the consequences, as strong as the love of life. It was the purpose of the Saviour that the Gospel should be presented without any compromise, that suggested to him, doubtless, to say, "If they persecute you in one city, flee into another." It is the course that the New-England ministry has always adopted and regarded essential to Christian fidelity, and, acting upon it, it has been signally blessed. Dr. Hopkins, at Newport, met a flourishing slave trade, and drove it out of the Church and off from the island. Dr. Beecher assailed the demon intemperance, when nearly every other conscience was slumbering, and when the evil was being cherished in the very bosom of the Church. And what is still more to the purpose in this connection,

as showing the sense of obligation there has been in the Society to pursue this course, it is the principle that the *Tract Society itself* has adopted and has acted upon, except as it has broken down upon this one point. Its plan has been to issue tracts designed to awaken and convince, to illustrate the plan of salvation through Christ, the nature of faith and repentance, and to unfold the consolatory truths of the Bible; an exhibition of the Gospel suitable to all classes and times, and to all parts of the world. And then, moreover, evidently deeming this but a part of its duty, it has brought the claims of the Gospel down to particular cases, telling what it requires in specific relations and in regard to certain existing habits; thereby showing what is the law of morality, in distinction from what is the law of sin and custom. It has done this in reference to intemperance, and gambling, and theater-going, and other evils. Whenever these evils have come rushing in like a flood upon us, it has lifted up the standard of the Lord against them.

Here then is the difficulty. The principle being one that neither a prophet, nor an apostle, nor the New England ministry generally,—nor our missionaries, it may be added, too,—have dared to disobey, nor the Society itself, except in this one particular, what is to excuse it here? What right has it to make a distinction in sins? We come then to the arguments.

It will be seen that the point to be met is such, that those who would justify the Society, must show that it has no *responsibility* upon this subject; that, although it assumed a responsibility which obligates it, in the very words used, to publish with reference to the evils and vices of slavery as it does with reference to other evils, yet, for some reason or other, it finds itself at length wholly unable to do it. It is not a question of what is *right* simply, in the sense referred to in one of the speeches; i. e., a case where it is *right to do a thing*, and equally *right not to do it*; but it is a question of *obligation*. The Society goes South for the purpose of promoting vital godliness and sound morality; this is its announcement. It must, therefore, expound and enforce its standard. The point of the argument, then, in order to be successful, must be to show that, though the Society honestly assumed this work and meant to do it, it somehow finds itself all at once incapacitated for it; it has no power to do it.

And this is what is attempted. "Slavery is a subject upon which good men differ in opinion upon many points," says one of the speakers; referring evidently to a clause in the constitution of the Society, viz., it is to do its work by the "circulation of religious tracts calculated to receive the approbation of all evangelical Christians." The Society cannot publish, therefore, upon slavery as upon other evils, is the argument, because, there being a difference of opinion among good men as to many points respecting it, the constitution limits it. But limits it to what?

The language is very happily chosen. Had it been to tracts receiving the approbation of all evangelical Christians, so many are living, through ignorance and temptation, in the neglect of duty or in the practice of what others regard greater or less immoralities, that the Society could have made almost no progress at all. It could never have touched many of the points upon which, as it is, it has done essential service. It must have been simply a blind follower of human imperfections and passions, with no power to prevent the most alarming declensions. But whatever, through ignorance and temptation, may be the present life of any Christian, there is always a principle in him that responds to the truth. Show him that it is a part of the truth of God, and it is "calculated" to receive his approbation. This is our hold upon him, and we can lift him higher and higher. Happily, therefore, the constitution has just this word, "Tracts *calculated* to receive the approbation of all evangelical Christians;" i. e., tracts having the *spirit* of the Bible and exhibiting the *requirements* of the Bible. And such are those upon the duties growing out of the existence of slavery, and upon the evils of it. For, when the Society was formed, Christians, to some extent, were writing and circulating them. And seven years after the formation of the Society, oral, and newspaper, and pamphlet discussions, upon these and kindred subjects, occupied the public mind of Virginia for a whole season, well-nigh resulting in emancipation in the State.

And that there was no insuperable difficulty in applying the Gospel in this specific manner, is inferred also from the declaration of the Executive Committee, soon after the formation of the Society. "It is obvious," said the Committee, congratulating the Churches upon the organization of a National Society, "that the

only difficulty in forming a Tract Society upon these enlarged principles, lies in the *doctrinal character* of the tracts to be circulated." Any difficulty in applying the Gospel to practical life, and in speaking of certain sins, it seems, then, was not expected; nor, according to this, was it encountered. The word "doctrinal" had a specific meaning. It was a matter that excited a great deal of solicitude; and when it was found that the difficulty could be overcome, and the Churches could unite on a common basis, it was a matter of earnest congratulation. But as to slavery, there was but one doctrine at the time prevalent, and that was, that it was a political and moral evil; and so it was always spoken of. And again, we have the testimony of the Committee of Fifteen to this point, which is, that the Society not only *can* but that it *ought* to publish upon these subjects; that is, in the opinion of this Committee such tracts are "*calculated* to receive the approbation of all evangelical Christians." Add to this, too, that their opinion comes to us recommended by the Society itself, by a "unanimous" adoption of it as its own; so that, unless the vote adopting the resolution of the Committee has been rescinded, as some claim that it has not, it stands recorded to-day that, in the opinion of the Society, it *can* and *ought* to publish upon these subjects. The argument drawn from a supposed limitation is evidently, then, not admissible. And indeed it has always seemed to us disingenuous to urge it; for while the officers of the Society have said, "Do not press us to publish upon these subjects, we cannot do it, we are limited," they have also said, "An examination of our tracts and books will show that we *have* published upon them."

Another argument presented, as bearing upon this point, is this: "To publish upon the subject (slavery) would be contrary to all the rules laid down by those who *early* conducted the affairs of the Society."

The force of the argument is this: Those who had the early management of the affairs of the Society probably understood the spirit and aim of the Constitution. And, hence the inference is, if they were silent upon the duties of masters and the evils and vices of slavery, it was because it was understood that these subjects were excluded. Their course is to be regarded as their interpretation of their duty under the Constitution. But here we

are troubled again with that constantly recurring question, sometimes settled in one way, and sometimes in another; i. e., "Has the Society, or has it not, published upon slavery?" If it has, as is claimed, then the course of the early managers of the Society is in favor of doing it now. But again, whether it has or has not, it is evident that the early managers of the Society adopted the principle of applying the gospel to particular sins. It is only carrying out their principle, therefore, to go forward and apply it to the sins of slavery. And it is quite possible that the early managers ought to have done this themselves. And, no doubt, if they had done it, sustained, as they would have been by the then recent action of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, whose instruction upon these points did "receive the approbation of all evangelical Christians," the tracts would have been acceptable everywhere. But a violent agitation commencing, soon after the Society was formed, upon the question of removing slavery, on the one hand by a gradual colonization, and on the other by immediate and unconditional abolition, as in the West Indies, the officers endeavored to steer clear of it. And in doing it, they gave up the *common ground*, always maintained by the churches of the North, and, till recently, by the churches South. But whether they did so because they thought the Constitution required it is not so evident. The evidence is rather the other way; it is, that for the first few years of the Society, such tracts as it is now asked to publish would have been acceptable both North and South. And moreover, it is to be borne in mind, in attempting to determine the force of this argument, that those who early conducted the affairs of the Society, and who, in public opinion, have been instrumental in introducing and fixing its present policy, not even consulting the churches, are conducting them now.

The appeal is therefore without force. The Society itself has never calmly, and seriously, and unanimously pronounced its opinion upon the matter but once. And then it said, the duties of masters and the evils and vices of slavery, are subjects that *can* and *ought* to be discussed. The claim of a constitutional limitation, then, cannot be admitted. There is no difference of opinion upon the subjects connected with slavery, greater than there is with reference to other evils. If therefore the Society can publish upon

one, it can and ought to publish upon the other; and it is a plain violation of principle to refuse to do so. It is presuming to do the work of promoting vital godliness and sound morality in an unscriptural way; not magnifying, but degrading the law. We need a Society therefore conducted on entirely different principles, one that will bow the knee to no power but to God.

The remaining arguments might properly be passed over. They have no necessary connection with the subject. Still, however, as they have a popular effect upon persons not bearing in mind the particular point at issue, we give them a passing notice.

"The subject (slavery) is sufficiently cared for by one or more other Societies that have specially taken it in charge," says one of the judges. But so also has the subject of temperance been specially taken in charge by other Societies; and if it is not a good reason for silence in this case, why is it in the other?

The argument drawn from the opinion of the "Committee of Fifteen," another argument urged: viz., the Society is worthy of confidence, because this committee, having carefully investigated its matters, says that it is doing a good work and no part of it can be safely curtailed, utterly falls short of the point. And here we include too, as a part of the same argument, the considerations that the Society was *organized by good men, is sustained by good men*, (we wish some of the good men quoted in these speeches had been allowed to speak for themselves, to tell not only what they *once* thought, but what they *now* think of the Society,) and is *doing good*. All this has nothing to do with the case. The question is, is it right for the Tract Society, when it comes in conflict with certain sins, to do nothing positively, as it does in other cases, to apply the laws of God. Who organized the Society, who sustains it, and what good it is doing, is not the question at all. It is a kind of argument that in questions of right and wrong, conscientious men are not wont to rely upon. Suppose we try it in another case. Is it right, for instance, for the College at Cambridge to deny the divinity of Christ? The reply is, It was founded by good men. But what of that? Again, Is it right to carry on the slave trade? Supposing ourselves living in the time of Wilberforce, the reply is, Many good men support it. But what of that? Again, Is it right for men to be brought to their death as Christ was? Great good resulted from it, we are told. And

yet, what progress have we made? A college has rejected Christ, and yet good men *founded it*. A trade has been carried on that is accursed of God and men, and yet good men *supported it*. Judas has betrayed Christ, and wicked hands have crucified him, and yet *great good comes from it*. But what has all this settled? What, except that good men sometimes begin a work, and others fail to carry it out: also that good men have supported what is afterwards regarded wrong; and that great wrongs may be attended with great good? We do not then like the argument. And yet, it is true, it is not without some degree of propriety. And perhaps in regard to the opinion of the committee, it is especially appropriate; for the committee represents a high type, both of talent and piety, and it was appointed to give this matter a careful examination.

But then, taking this view of it, the argument is in favor of the movement, for it is carrying out what the committee says the Society ought to do. And the method by which the judge attempts to extricate himself from this difficulty does not help the matter. He begins with one argument, and ends with another. He calls in the committee and lets it testify to a certain extent, and then refuses to hear it beyond that. He lets it testify as to what the Society has done, but rejects its testimony the moment it tells what it ought to do. Respect the opinion of the committee, and do not respect it, is the argument. Confide in the Society for what the committee says it has done, and when it refuses to do what the committee says it *ought* to do, confide in it for its own wisdom. So that we have made no progress. We come back to the original question. What ground of confidence have we in the Society? If we take the opinion of the committee, as we are at first advised to do, the Society is culpable, for that is the opinion of the committee to-day. If we do not take it, then the only ground of confidence we have is, that at a very boisterous meeting, got up in a peculiar way, the Society decided to adopt the policy of its *officers*, rather than that recommended by the committee, and adopted the year before, calmly and unanimously, by the Society.

Another argument presented, is that there are practical difficulties in the way. It is asked, for instance, "If the Society begins to publish, where shall it stop, what shall it teach?" But this is as

good an argument in favor of publishing, as for not publishing. For, if the Society begins to make a *distinction in sins*, where is it to stop? Shall it rebuke sins in America, or only those in Algiers? Shall it publish against existing sins, or only against those of former generations? Against those that are most popular and profitable, and that are therefore committed extensively, or only against those that are seldom committed? There are difficulties connected with all our duties, and if we refuse for this reason to do them we shall soon do nothing. But the man who takes up one duty after another with a manly purpose will grow strong. He will find that difficulties are an important means of development, both in virtue and in strength of mind.

Again, it is said that "the matter is intimately connected with the Politics of the country." And so is the subject of temperance also. But as this does not excuse the Society in keeping silent in the latter case, why should it in the former? No objection is made, if we understand it, to bringing religion into politics; but only to bringing politics into religion: religion is to go everywhere, and pervade everything, this is its province. At the same time, however, those aspects of the subject that are simply political, and not moral, the Society is not asked to notice.

It is said too, that not to publish against slavery is "no approval of it." But this is a position, that for a Christian or Christian institution, the peculiarity of whose religion is that it is wholly aggressive, is especially obnoxious. The curse pronounced against Meroz was because the people "came not up to the help of the Lord against the mighty;" they simply did nothing. The sentence "Depart, ye cursed," is pronounced against those who *do not*; who see others in want and do not feed, and clothe, and help them. If two forces are struggling upon our threshold, one to lay waste, and the other to defend and protect our property and family, as we estimate things, the neighbor who refuses to assist the latter is implicated with the former. And on the same principle, when the warfare between Christianity and sin grows fierce, not to *resist* the sin, is to *help* it.

Another, and a sufficient answer to this argument is, that it wants an endorsement. It is not a principle that the venerable Judge has been wont to act upon. One of the first steps in the

aggressive march of slavery was to demand new territory, resulting in the "Missouri Compromise." And the citizens of Hartford came together to make a protest. They voted that a remonstrance be prepared and forwarded to the Senate and House of Representatives, and that Judge Williams and the Rev. Mr. Gallaudet be the Committee to prepare it. And here we find the venerable Judge writing as follows: "We deprecate the diffusion of the slaveholding spirit, so hostile to the temper of that religion which is at once the brightest ornament and the surest strength of a people, and so ungrateful in its exercise towards that Being to whose justice we appealed when we ourselves felt the pressure of that very yoke of bondage, which now bears with more galling and cruel weight on thousands of our fellow men."

If, then, the principle was not a good one at that time, why is it now? Is slavery any less "hostile to the temper of religion?" Is it less "ungrateful to that Being to whose justice we appealed?" Is the "yoke of bondage" less "galling and cruel," or, are any less "thousands" groaning under it? Is it a less evil for slavery to demand new territory, than it is, in addition to this, to assume to give new laws of interpretation to the Bible, to give us a new religion, with the law of might for the law of right, and thus make Christianity an ally of iniquity, as it is now doing? This change of feeling since 1820, when the citizens of Hartford, and those of other parts of the country felt called upon to lift their voice against the spread of slavery, to the feeling of the present time, when Christians, even, are expected to look, not only upon this, but upon an attempt, also, to engraft slavery upon the Bible, in silence, or without using the appropriate means for resisting it, is one of the signs of the times. It shows how far the conscience of the country has already been affected; and what the Tract Society is doing to let down the standard of Christian morality.

The last argument urged is that of expediency, viz: That we should not ask the Society to publish upon slavery, for, if it begins to do it, it will be driven out of the South, and thus there will be a sacrifice of the good it is now doing.

There is a sensitiveness here about the gospel being received, that Christ never encouraged. And, moreover, the Judge overlooks the fact that this argument has its natural limitations. And as

men find them out, we may hope the day of compromises will pass by. If a man wishes to go South, the mode of travel, whether by carriage, a saddle, or a rail car, may be settled on the principle of expediency. But if he wishes to go under another man's name, there is a law for it. So, too, if he wishes to teach theology there, he may decide what topics he will take for any given time, or place, as a matter of expediency. But his topics being selected, what he shall say in regard to them, what conceptions he shall give of them, he has a law for, "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to *this word*, it is because there is no light in them." The declaration stands over him, "If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and out of the things which are written in this book." God is exceedingly jealous of his truth. He allows no adding to it, and no taking from it. If the man, therefore, selects vital godliness and sound morality, the topic selected by the Tract Society, he must teach the morality he finds written; nothing more, nothing less. He is to offer a Saviour who saves men not *in* their sins, but *from* them. He must present Christ, not as an ark into which he is to gather them, simply, as Noah gathered in beasts, clean and unclean, but as a sovereign; who, though "the times of ignorance he winked at, *now commandeth all men everywhere to repent*,"—"and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance."

If, then, Christ makes no compromises, abates not one jot, nor one tittle of the law, has this Society a right to do it? Has it a right to hold back a claim, because men will not yield to it? When Christ's express instruction is, "if they persecute you in one city, flee into another," is the Society to modify its teachings to a point that will make itself comfortable in every city? Is it to be the first and most sacred duty of the Society to keep pace with an apostatising Christianity? Like a defeated army, is it to retreat from post to post, till it gets back under its battlements, a *general christianity*, with *no particular applications*, with *nothing that anybody can find fault with*? This is a sensitiveness in regard to having the gospel received that Christ never exhibited.

And then, if we are to adopt the doctrine of expediency, there are different degrees of it, and that is most expedient which suc-

ceeds best. Since then, the Society, when in 1825, it took the field could have published all that is now asked of it upon the subject of slavery, and adopting its present policy, has now lost that privilege, as is claimed, the doctrine of expediency leads us to the policy pursued in Kentucky. The Rev. J. G. Fee, and a few others, a few years since, found the State closed to them. But by perseverance, and applying the whole gospel, they have now opened it; and they can scatter whatever tracts they please, upon the duties of masters and the evils of slavery. It has been a struggle; to some extent a work of suffering, and, no doubt more so from the fact that slavery, having silenced one society, expected to silence all others. But the field is now open, and the policy that won it is more expedient than that which lost it.

Such are the arguments. The first speech is historical; it does not therefore expand the arguments, but simply states them. The second speech urges confidence in the Society, on the ground of the opinion of the Committee of Fifteen; and then, passing from this, it urges it on the ground of the good judgment of the Society itself. The third urges the policy of the Society on the ground of expediency.

We find, then, nothing in these speeches, calculated to arrest this movement. The arguments, and they are all we remember to have seen, are inadequate to the purpose. The plea of inability, the only available one for the Society, can, evidently, never prevail. The words of the Constitution, the judgment of the "Committee of Fifteen," and the endorsement of their opinion by a "unanimous" vote of the Society, to say nothing of other reasons, makes it impossible. The deep conviction of the community is, that the Society *can* and *ought* to publish upon slavery. And if so, it is the duty of the churches to *withstand it, for it is to be blamed*. If, however, the Society really wishes to publish upon this subject but *cannot*, then the case is somewhat different. Still, however, the Society is not what the churches want for a Tract Society even then. For having commenced a work that requires specific applications of the gospel to the practical life, it at length finds itself tied. The clause in the Constitution, that was designed to give it liberty and strength in the contest with sin, is used to fetter it. The unfore-

seen circumstance which has resulted in this, is the unexpected growth and boldness of slavery. Nothing is wanting, then, to complete the perfect impotence of the Society, but for other evils, cherished by a large minority of professing Christians, to grow equally bold; and, as soon as they make a protest, the Society must be silent. The once strong man is bound.

In either case, then, this movement should go forward. Never was sin rushing in upon us with more fearful strides. And this particular form of it, slavery, the parent of a thousand crimes and cruelties, is now struggling to assert for itself the sacred sanction of religion; and to dictate laws to the church and to the nation. Unless, then, Christians expect to save men in their sins, they will want a Tract Society that will help them to teach *what things are sins*.

We have ventured to discuss this subject, because it seems to us to be one of the greatest interest. We have felt deeply grieved at the course pursued by the Society at New York; and however much it may injure the Society for us to say this, and to resist its policy, the cause of truth requires it of us. The Society, in our view, is encouraging a "form of godliness that denies the power of it." It is compromising with sin, and is alarmingly debauching the conscience of the church and the country. This is our apology for writing; and though we regret to differ with brethren, we must contend for the integrity of Christian truth and practice. And fully convinced that God in his providence will eventually bring all his people to rejoice in the triumph of the right, however much they may at present differ, we await the result with the calmest confidence.

HARTFORD, April 30th, 1859.

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